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ABSTRACT

Middle school students should be involved in seeking and selecting reading materials that ensure the attention of the learner. A wide variety of topics for learners to select from in choosing sequential trade books is a must. Sequential books selected by the middle school student should harmonize with his/her present level of achievement in reading. Numerous procedures are available to evaluate the emerging adolescent's reading progress; for example, one sixth-grade student teacher guided a learner to make a diorama based on "Where the Wild Things Are," while three other sixth graders developed a mural based on content reading which was placed on display in the hallway. Self-evaluation was used by the students when the teacher asked relevant questions about the product. Middle school students can be very responsible individuals when following their own interests in the reading curriculum. Some other approaches to appraise middle school student achievement in reading are: writing a letter to the author to indicate interest in the trade book; presenting an oral report to the class; developing a related formal dramatics presentation; rating a library book based on clearly defined criteria; and making comparisons between two trade books as to likenesses and differences in content, style, and purpose. (NKA)

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PROMOTING INTEREST IN MIDDLE SCHOOL READING

Interest is a powerful psychological factor in learning to read. Emerging adolescents need to experience an interesting reading curriculum in order to attain optimal achievement. Middle school students individually need to be involved in seeking, selecting, and pursing reading materials that insure the attention of the learner. A wide variety of topics for learners to select from in choosing sequential trade books is a must. Reading materials must be written on different achievement levels. Sequential books selected by the middle school student should harmonize with his/her present level of achievement in reading .

Seminar procedures may be used whereby participants have read the same book and are ready for an in-depth study of its contents. Enjoyment appreciation, and interest are three concepts which a quality middle school reading curriculum should emphasize.

Evaluation of Achievement

Emerging adolescents need to determine how they wish to be evaluated in terms of progress in reading.There are numerous procedures available. Approaches used need to encourage, not hinder,interest in reading.

A sixth grade student teacher supervised by the writer guided a learner to make a diorama of content read. The three dimensional scene emphasized neatness,accuracy,and thoroughness of subject matter read.The central idea in the diorama portrayed a different setting than that presented in WHERE THE WILD THINGS ARE by Maurice Sendak. The sixth grade pupil was thoroughly involved in developing the diorama and reported on how his scene was different from the setting of WHERE THE WILD THINGS ARE. Another sixth grade student drew a picture portraying a main idea secured from reading. The learner indicated difficulties involved in determining the main idea since many important facts were also gleaned. The emerging adolescent comprehended

content exceptionally well to suggest what other generalizations might also be considered as the main idea.The pupil could give many supporting details when choosing the main idea presented in art form.Self evaluation was used to appraise the quality of the art product. The pupil was asked by the student teacher;

1.What would you do differently next time when drawing an illustration involving content read ?

2.Did you draw the scene as accurately as possible?

3.Which new ideas did you think about when planning your illustration?

Three sixth grade pupils developed a mural based of content read. The student teacher guided learners in planning their mural. The plan was general, not specific in the outline . This left leeway for the middle school pupil to be creative in implementing the plan. With creativity in evidence, pupils may then bring into the mural that which is of personal interest. When questions were raised of the student in how to proceed with the mural,pupils were encouraged to select media and related content to reveal comprehension.Ideas were explored for the mural content. Pupils in the sharing session had a better opportunity to select, from among alternatives, as to which salient subject matter should be emphasized in art form. Interest and excitement are in evidence as pupils explore, discover, and invent. The completed mural was placed on display in the hallway. Pupils from other classrooms commented favorably on the mural.These pupils, in many cases, also wanted to develop murals. Thus teaching suggestions used in one classroom may spread to other sets of learners taught in the classroom setting. Content for the mural came from THE COLOR PURPLE by Alice Stalker. Here, Celie's character was shown to change through the language of her letters--language which changes with an improved self-concept.

Middle school pupils can be very responsible individuals when following their own interests in the reading curriculum. One pupil wished to pantomime content read. A few weeks prior to this time, a mime conducted a workshop for teachers using pantomime as a method of

teaching. The mime had also visited selected classrooms to show pupils how interesting pantomime can be in ongoing units of study. After carefully comprehending content in a trade book, the pupil planned and presented a pantomime to others to reveal comprehension. The pantomime presentation was appraised by the presenter in terms of enjoyment, thoroughness, and preparation. The listeners needed to be able to identify the contents of the trade book being pantomimed. The pantomime presented come from content in I KNOW WHY THE CAGED BIRD SINGS, An autobiography by Maya Angelow.

A committee of learners developed and gave a creative dramatics presentation. The members had read the same paperback. Collectively, they planned who would play specific roles in the trade book all had read. After clarifying role presentation, the members of the committee play their respective roles in presenting speaking parts creatively. In appraising the self, each learner indicated high interest in creative dramatics, as indicated in questionnaire results.

One highly respected activity conducted by the student teacher was to have four or five middle school pupils on each committee, taking turns in reading orally to each other. The first pupil reading orally reads a few sentences or reads a longer selection from the trade book. The book is passed to the next committee member for oral reading. All in a committee have opportunities to secure ideas through listening and oral reading. No one is left out of the reading activity. Frequently, learners will read the entire trade book to themselves later. Middle school pupils love to discuss obtained ideas in a committee setting. With a small group, frequent chances to interact during the discussion is possible. The quality of oral reading and of the discussion were appraised in terms of cooperatively developed standards.

Numerous additional approaches may be used to appraise middle school student achievement in reading.

1. writing a letter to the author to indicate interest in reading the trade book.

2. writing a different setting, plot, theme, or point of view than that

provided in the trade book.

3. presenting an oral report to the class.

4. outlining selected subject matter.

5. developing a related formal dramatics presentation.

6. reading additional books by the same author or on the same or similar topic.

7. playing the role of the author and being interviewed by a classmate.

8. constructing props for a dramatization based on the trade book completed.

9. designing a bulletin board covering content in a trade book read.

10. making a book mark which has content from a chosen book.

11. rating a library book based on clearly defined criteria.

12.writing a summary.

13.drawing a map emphasizing the setting of the story.

14. designing a test covering main ideas in the reading selection.

15. making comparisons between two trade books as to likenesses and differences in content, style, and purpose.

Methods used to appraise adolescent achievement should encourage, not stifle, interest in reading. Individuals need to learn more about themselves and about others personalities. Vicarious learning and modeling of behaviors are salient topics for emerging adolescents.

In Closing

Quality objectives in the reading curriculum need to be in evidence. Self-selection of reading materials encourages interest in reading. Appraisal procedures to determine adolescent achievement should provide intrinsic motivation. Life-long interests need to be developed and maintained.

Reading skills need continual development and refining. There is

no end to achievement except increased growth in reading content in school and in society.